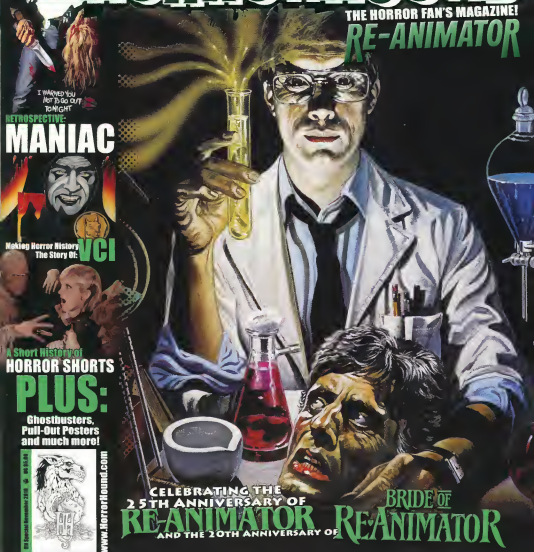


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unable to be named here.

*All articles written by Aaron Crowell and Nathan
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ON THE COVER: Celebrating 25 Years of Re-Animator!

While maintaining a bi-monthly release schedule, the staff of HorrorHound have taken advantage of the two-a-year conventions we host to present these 32-page special editions of HorrorHound Magazine. Each issue comes packed with a sampling of our regular-features that fans have come to love and expect with each edition of HorrorHound. While loosely focused around our November convention lineup (Re-Animator, Ghostbusters and Maniac), this issue still maintains the aesthetics of HorrorHound Magazine. Included is an updated Re-Animator Retrospective (originally printed in HorrorHound #2) and the premiere of a new feature article series, Under the Mask. Added to this, our special look at the history of VCI Home Entertainment, a bonus mini-retrospective on the William Lustig cult classic, Maniac, and a double-sided pull-out poster from Joel Robinson and Nathan Miller, and I think you have a pretty damn spiffy special edition of HorrorHound!

Nathan Hanneman (Editor-in-Chief)

HORRORHOUND WEEKEND

- EVENT PULL OUT POSTERS!

Ghostbusters & Re-Animator

Here's what you do:

Carefully pull back the center-cut staple ends from this program's center spread (but do not remove them). Once pulled back, carefully remove the center spread (poster) featuring Re-Animator. Once removed, you will notice a second poster (Ghostbusters) printed on the backside. Once the poster(s) are removed you can "save" back the staple ends to their original state. Now you have two possible 11x17 scaled posters to get signed, frame and hang, or pin to your bedroom wall!

Creating Short Nightmares

Visit Fwendo's Web site and you'll be greeted by some creepy sounds and the following declaration: "Fwendo is a sinister entity that brings your darkest nightmares to life in rapid bursts of story and image feed on your mind, horror, and grief... Fwendo. We create nightmares."

The current lineup of Fwendo consists of six very talented film fans: Mitchell Carr, John Cohn, Paul Hupertford, David Schneider, Todd A. Sherry, and Kirk B.R. Waller — all with working pedigrees that include many A-list projects such as *Lord of the Rings*, *Final Destination*, *Memento*, *Donnie Darko*, *Minority Report*, *The X-Files*, and cult hits like *Star 80*. *Raving Mind* (co-directed by Schneider and former Fwendo member Drew Cypriotti).

Fwendo has been showing their horror shorts at film festivals and conventions since 2006 and they were the backbone of the first Web site dedicated to horror shorts at FEWDO.com. Some of their more popular shorts include:

- "The Tale of Haunted Mike" — Mike makes plenty of money selling bogus "haunted" items on e-Bay, but his days of ripping people off are numbered when he comes across a peculiar antique: a child's prosthetic arm.

- "Beside" — Your burglar alarm goes off, but there's nothing there. It goes off again, but nothing is there. Nothing is there. ... Nothing is there.

- "Smoke" (A tribute to Edgar Allan Poe) — How can you get away with murder when there's a smoking gun?

- "Gaze" — Would you rather have knowledge or happiness? Faith or certainty? Ten thousand dollars or proof that hell exists?

These four, plus more than a dozen quality shorts can be viewed at Fwendo's Web site or on their YouTube channel. Also, a DVD anthology of Fwendo's first 13 horror shorts titled *Nightmare House Volume 1* is available at www.FEWDO.com.

Fwendo's short features emphasize story and atmosphere over all else. They are rapidly made, yet quirky and fun. They will entertain the horror veteran and the inexperienced viewer alike. Some are nail-bitingly intense, others are funny, and some are heart-breakingly sincere and incredibly effective. All are exceptional works that elevate the horror short to a new level. If you are a fan of horror, you owe it to yourself to check them out at FEWDO.com or at any of their festival or convention appearances.

— by Freddy Morris (Night of the Living Podcast)

HORRORHOUND RADIO IS A DOWNLOADABLE PODCAST THAT FEATURES EDITORS WARREN CROWELL AND NATHAN MANHEIM. IN CONJUNCTION WITH NIGHT OF THE LIVING PODCAST, THAT FEATURES DISCUSSIONS ON THE LATEST NEWS AND CONTENT RELATING TO EACH ISSUE OF HORRORHOUND MAGAZINE AS THEY ONE-ON-ONE LEARN INTERESTING INFORMATION REGARDING THE PRODUCTION OF EVERY ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE, RANGING FROM DECISIONS ON THE COVERS AND ARTICLES AND THE CONCEPTION OF THE VARIOUS IDEAS AND THEMES FOUND IN PRINT! GET THE INSIDE SCOOP DIRECTLY FROM THOSE RESPONSIBLE EPISODES ALSO PERIODICALLY FEATURE GUEST CALL-IN FROM THE HORRORHOUND STAFF TO DISCUSS COLUMNS AND RETROSPECTIVES!

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A SHORT HISTORY OF HORROR SHORTS

By Aaron Crowell
List by Jason Nigritte

Telling the history of the short horror film is impossible without revealing the origins of cinema itself. In the 1800s, the creation of celluloid film and motion picture cameras gave mankind the ability to capture and project a moving image. The first films were silent and often ran but for only a few seconds in length. These silent black-and-white shorts featured little narrative due to their basic duration. In France, on December 24th, 1896 (Christmas Eve), the first horror film was premiered with a run time of two minutes, titled *Le Manoir du diable* (*The House of the Devil*), directed by George Méliès. The film showcased a giant bat flying into a Gothic castle, where it transformed into Mephistopheles who produces skeletons, witches and ghosts from a bubbling cauldron until a crucifix is revealed and the devil vanishes into a blast of smoke. Thomas Edison later acquired a print of the film and then duplicated and distributed it in the United States, where it achieved financial success. In 1910, Edison Studios presented the first screen version of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, best known as Edison's *Frankenstein*, that had a run time of 16 minutes. The cast was comprised of three actors: Mary Fuller (Elizabeth), Augustus Phillips (Frankenstein) and Charles Ogle (the Monster). More horror shorts followed: *The Chamber of Horrors*, more of a cautionary tale than a horror story, and *The Lunatics*, an adaptation by de Lorde (one of the Grand Guignol regular writers) based on the Edgar Allan Poe short story (*The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether*), both released in 1912 and ran roughly 15 minutes in length. Even the first cinematic lycanthrope (a female) ran wild in the 1913 film titled *The Werewolf*, an 18-minute short. Over time shorts grew into feature-length films with longer run times and larger productions. *Life Without Soul*, released in 1916, was the first feature-length adaptation of the novel *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*,

classic silent films

In 1910, shorts in the US were better known as "short subjects" and were played after feature films. They were often animated cartoons, comedies, travelogues or news articles but they were not yet called "short films." Initially, sound pictures incorporating synchronized dialogue, known as "talking pictures" or "talkies," were exclusively shorts. Then in the 1930s, the shorts began to die off with less being produced each year and later the rise of television in the 1950s delivered a near-fatal blow. Shorts films became more associated with art than entertainment in the '60s, thanks to directors like Andy Warhol who helped keep their spirit alive, as the cinematic short was relegated and embraced by independent filmmakers where this timeless cinematic art form has truly endured. Nearly every filmmaker has shot their own short, often at the virgin stage of their motion-picture careers. Visionary directors such as David Lynch (*Erasehead*) continue to produce and write shorts to this day, even releasing some (*Dumbland* and *The Short Films of David Lynch*) to DVD. Another notable director, David Cronenberg, has a rich history in the world of short films with many produced for TV. Shorts have always proved a very important tool in helping many horror directors in getting their film projects greenlit. Sam Rami's horror classic, *Evil Dead* all stemmed from a little short titled *Within the Woods* - a device the director used to solicit funding for the production. Saw was also originally shot as a short to help gauge interest, leading to the iconic franchise status it holds today. Both shorts are testaments to the power of the short film. As most movie fans are aware, film festivals are held across the US at horror conventions and the world over as a place for cinephiles to gather, share, vote and hopefully enjoy these clever creations together. Short films provide anyone with the desire and creative ambition the opportunity to create their own movie, be it an aspiring FX artist, screen writers or even magazine editors. Here is a list of 20 shorts you may want to track down.



United Monster Talent Agency

So you're making a horror movie and you need some monsters. Who ya gonna call? The United Monster Talent Agency, of course! SFX superstar Greg Nicotero makes his solo directorial debut with this amazing short film in which the classic Universal monsters are real and ready for hire. Includes cameos from El Rohn, Derek Mears, Robert Rodriguez and Jeffrey Combs. (8 minutes)

Thirsty

A slacker embarks on a cross-country drive along a lonely desert highway. As a massive heat wave rolls in, only one thing can quench his monstrous thirst: a delicious frozen beverage. But first he must dodge a series of bizarre obstacles and ultimately survive the night. (15 minutes)



Now That You're Dead

A woman dispatches her cheating husband and his mistress, only to discover that things aren't exactly what they seem. Nevertheless, you can't keep a good woman down, and she's determined to have the last laugh - as long as it happens before sunrise. (14 minutes)



Meth

Much more than a "just say no" propaganda piece, Michael Maney creates a unique social mythology in his short, *Meth*. A downward drug-induced spiral leads to talking mannequins, murder and vigilante justice. Amazing story, great CGI and a perfect soundtrack - see *Meth* - but don't do it. (25 minutes)



X-Mess Debris

A dark holiday short and the third film in his *Chimerascope* series, *X-Mess Debris* is narrated by Gerard Way (My Chemical Romance). Voltaire brings a subtle environmental theme to this beautifully macabre stop-motion film. And, just I forgot - animated meat ... yes, I said animated meat. Be sure to check out all of his shorts at www.voltaire.net. (2 minutes)

Definition: Any film that includes a run time of 40 minutes or shorter is considered a "short film."



Edison's Frankenstein

Recognized as the first monster movie, J. Searle Dawley wrote and directed this 1910 production for Edison Studios. Shot in three days in New York, film historians believe that Thomas Edison personally produced *Frankenstein*, however, there is no historical proof that he had any involvement on this project (16 minutes)



Repo! the Genetic Opera

Repo! began its life on stage. After gaining a significant underground following, the play was adapted into a 10-minute short film by Darren Lynn Bousman before it became the cult-classic feature. The short starred Shawnee Smith, Michael Rooker and co-creator Terrance Zdunich. (10 minutes)



Tooth Fairy

Directed by Joe Huns, *Tooth Fairy* was later adapted into the feature-length *Darkness Falls*. Though only five minutes in length, *Tooth Fairy* reveals the disturbing consequences of crossing the dealer of dental dysfunction – reminding us, “Close your eyes. You’re not supposed to see her.” (5 minutes)



Saw

Even the second-highest grossing movie franchise of all time began as a short film. Australian film students James Wan and Leigh Whannell knew the exact story they wanted to tell, from the torture devices to Jigsaw's puppet (Billy) on a toyco. Saw got it right – even as a short film. (3.5 minutes)



Night of the Hell Hamsters

On a dark and stormy night, a young babysitter and her boyfriend find themselves toiling around... with the occult. With a make-shift Ouija board, they accidentally summon a demon who possesses the family hamsters – brr, furry, bloodthirsty supernatural evils from the very pits of Hell! (16 minutes)



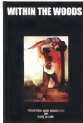
Side Effect

A couple hires an over-achieving girl to babysit their children. Stressed, the babysitter seeks the assistance of a new prescription medication, the side effect of which could never be anticipated. Writer/director Liz Adams developed a script for a feature-length version of *Side Effect*, called *Blood Level*. (13 minutes)



Seance

Written and directed by Robin Kasperik, a film student at Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Czech Republic, *Seance* tells the story of three people trying to find the fortune of a deceased baroness. However, their psychic (played by famous actress Klara Jandová) conjures more than what the group had anticipated. (19 minutes)



Within the Woods

Written and directed by Sam Reimi and starring Bruce Campbell, *Within the Woods* was shot on Super 8 mm film. The short received double billing with *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, where it was seen by a critic and got a great review. This ultimately ushered the funding for Ram to film *The Evil Dead*. (17 minutes)



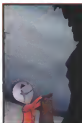
Cannibal Flesh Riot

The story of two ghosts who head out into a cemetery for dinner one night, *Cannibal Flesh Riot* is the directional debut of horror artist Gus Grimly. This film is a black and white, neo-noir mix of live action with traditional and stop-motion animation. It would be difficult to find a film more original... and more appetizing. (34 minutes)



Death in Charge

Accidentally mistaken for the babysitter, Death is mesmerized by Whitney (a 9-year old girl) and marvels at the wonders of video games, Sea Monkeys, and macaroni and cheese. But, when Whitney reveals some dark secrets, Death returns the favor by granting a wish. (14 minutes)



Season's Greetings

Michael Dougherty first introduced the character Sam (i.e., Samhain) in this hauntingly charming animated predecessor to the 2009 release of *Trick r Treat*. This stylistic marriage of Tim Burton and Raymond Briggs, with hints of Hanna-Barbera, is available as a special feature on the *Trick r Treat* DVD and Blu-ray. (4 minutes)



La Jettée

Set in the ruins of post-WWII Paris, *La Jettée* (1962) tells the story of the last remaining Parisian survivors – scientists experimenting with time travel in order to save what is left of society. A man revisits the place of a childhood memory that has dire consequences. Directed by Chris Marker, *La Jettée* inspired the 1995 feature film *12 Monkeys*. (27 minutes)



Caution Sign

Directed by Wade Carey, *Caution Sign* is a simple argument gone too far. If you have been in that certain situation where you are convinced you are right and the other person is crazy, you are going to love this film. Winsans Todd Carey and Anna Serl must be well acquainted with this. Well, you know what they say... write what you know! (12 minutes)



Grace

Paul Solet wrote and directed this short that in was released as a feature in 2009. “You cannot will a baby back to life” – or can you? Great effects and lots of “fluids,” check out the version of the short with the commentary! Grace stars Liza Weil (*Ser of Echoes*) and Brian Austin Green (*Beverly Hills, 90210*). (7 minutes)



By Her Hand

She Draws You Down Based on the acclaimed story written by Douglas Smith, *By Her Hand* is a new approach to the vampire myths. It is a haunting tale of a portrait artist with an insatiable appetite. From Anthony Sumner and Alan Rowe Kelly, this film is currently creating a lot of buzz at film festivals across the US. (26 minutes)

25 Years of Death RE-ANIMATOR

A HorrorHound Retrospective • by Nathan Hanneman

H.P. Lovecraft created such amazing ideas as the Necronomicon, Cthulhu, the creatures of Innsmouth and the Miskatonic University (which a young Dr. Herbert West attended). Since Lovecraft's death, most of these stories, as well as fractions of their presence, can be seen throughout the world of literature and art – especially in cinema. From the feel of H.R. Giger's *Alien* to the otherworldly monsters from the pages of *Hellboy*, there is no denying that Lovecraft's ideas have lived far beyond what he could have originally imagined.

It is ironic though, that of all of his work that has inspired and has been printed, it is his least-favorite short story that has amounted the largest audience through the magical world of cinema. Herbert West – *The Re-Animator* was originally written as a six-part serial printed in the 1922 "magazine" *Home Brew*. Said by Lovecraft himself, the stories were only written for the much-needed paycheck (he was paid \$5 per chapter) and dismissed as "drivel written down to the masses." These stories were reprinted in 1942 thanks to *Weird Tales* magazine (running in six consecutive issues, as the original *Home Brew* series was). It is thanks to these printings that Herbert West was to eventually take flight.

The original six-part story comprised the tellings of a Herbert West by a colleague who is never revealed to the readers – the chapters each skipping in time throughout the life of the characters and their adventures in attempting to regenerate the life of the deceased. Tales of murder, madness and revenge pursue throughout the quick-telling journey which set up the two's careers beginning at Miskatonic University and building practices in small towns near graveyards in hopes of obtaining fresh specimens for their secret projects to acting as doctors in the World War and their confrontations with life and death in a secluded farmhouse. Sixty years later, Herbert West and



Original *Re-Animator* theatrical US one-sheet

his colleague finally had a chance to come back to life in their own rights.

In 1985 Stuart Gordon (director) and Brian Yuzna (producer) released one of the craziest spectacles to invade cinemas at that time – *Re-Animator*. Based on the Lovecraft short, the film starred newcomers: Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott and Barbara Crampton. Yuzna wanted to produce a film in the horror genre when he learned of the forgotten Lovecraft tale, and quickly hunted down one of the few intact copies in the tattered remains of a *Weird Tales* at a local library. The story was tweaked for film, with the original narration from the short story deleted and the focus of Dr. Hill (a character just briefly mentioned in the short) changed into the undead antagonist. Many pieces from the original story were intact (however much altered), but the fallout involving the young Barbara Crampton undressed and strapped to an autopsy table was all new. The story instead now focused on a young Dr. West (Combs) as a new student at Miskatonic University. Rooming with and "befriending" Dan Cain (Abbott), the two work together to prove to the world that there is indeed a way to reanimate the

recently deceased (thanks to a now-iconic "re-agent" created by Dr. West). The problem is that the re-agent does not work very well. Leaving the dead often mindless and rampaging, the duo are thrust into a series of unfortunate, and amazing events and experiments. When Dr. Hill (West's teacher/nemesis) becomes wise to the creation, he attempts to steal it and claim it as his own. In a psychic turn of events that leads to a zombie battle in the morgue of Miskatonic University, Dr. Hill meets the sharp end of a shovel only to be sickly brought back to life by the mad Dr. West. The driven performances, the solid story, an excess of gore and a familiar-sounding soundtrack cemented the film into history.



Left to right: The original *Home Brew* publication that began it all; Two of the original *Weird Tales* publications hosting the six-part tale; and a recent reprint of the complete archived Lovecraft stories



The original eight-piece lobby card set for the Japanese release of *Re-Animator*. As opposed to other foreign lobby sets, the Japanese tend to show off the goner aspects of the film. This is a complete contrast to anything in the past 30+ years released in North America and England. Tip for GoreHounds: always check out what the Japanese are doing!

To GoreHounds' delight everywhere, 1990 saw Herbert West return to the big screen with the release of *Bride of Re-Animator*. This time, directed by Brian Yuzna (*Society, Return of the Living Dead III*), the film borrowed exorcised material from the original movie. Not that it was filmed material, just unused ideas from the original Lovecraft story (the opening war sequence, toying with individual body parts, the secluded home next to the cemetery and the climactic ending are all aspects of the original story). Fans of the original *Re-Animator* are extremely split in their opinion of the sequel – either they love it (almost to a larger extent than the first film) or they straight-out despise it. No matter which side of the fence you lean toward, you cannot dismiss the brilliance of the movie's ability to shock. Over-the-top ideas are filmed perfectly in conjunction with straight-faced performances across the board. Combs and Abbott return as partners in bringing back the dead, while miraculously, the director found a way to bring back David Gale (Dr. Hill, who met his maker (twice) in the original film). Almost cartoonish at times, we see the character of Dr. Hill fly around

project in hopes of bringing his lost love, Megan, back to him, via her heart – which West had saved from the Miskatonic Massacre at the end of the initial film.) People die, and return, in another overly imaginative ending of chaotic proportions. As insane as *Re-Animator* was – “Bride” took splatter to the next level!

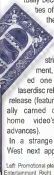
Soon after *Bride*'s release, horror started to see a decline in gore, with the success of new thrillers like *Silence of the Lambs* and *Basic Instinct*. Most of the genre fans' favorite gore films disappeared in place of slow-burns, drawn-out mysteries and true-to-life plots and storylines.

The only place a fan could pick up grotesque horror fare during this time was at the local video stores, thanks to the VHS Boom which began during the '80s and helped usher in new ways of providing quality work to horror fans more-and-more inclined toward home viewings. Letterbox presentations eventually became important, and laserdisc started the possibilities of high-end presentations for film favorites, including the inception of bonus features such as cast/crew commentaries, inclusion of deleted scenes and production features. Luckily, *Re-Animator* benefited from these strides in entertainment, as the film boasted one of the coolest laserdisc releases for a genre release (features which eventually carried over throughout home video's technological advances).

In a strange move, Herbert West next appeared in comic. Left: Promotional playing cards for *Re-Animator*. Right: *Re-Animator* press kit.



Video store promotional paper weight featuring the head of Dr. Hill.



FOREIGN HORROR

The most disturbing images from the *Re-Animator* series are some of the greatest reasons the films are still remembered to this day. It is these same moments in the GoreHound classic that have been hidden from the public eye for the film throughout their US distributor. Not only in theaters, but home video and DVD as well. Poster collectors can rejoice in the blood dripping off a number of Japanese promotional materials (seen above, at two rare original posters) as well as various foreign lobby card sets (seen throughout this page).



Sad Fact: David Gale's wife reportedly walked out of the theater upon viewing his infamous “head” sex scene



book form thanks to Adventure Comics in 1992. This mini-series retold the film's story, while a more interesting four-issue prequel comic was produced at the same time entitled Dawn of the Re-Animator. In this story, Herbert West deals with the outcome of what happened to the late professor Gruber (seen in the opening sequence of the original film). In this story, West partners with

Gruber's daughter as they encounter a past acquaintance of the professor who has achieved re-animation of the deceased through different means: voodoo. An interesting setup for the polar opposite of the scientific route West takes in his career, the series has since been out of print.

When the DVD format was introduced at the end of the '90s, *Re-Animator* and *Bride of Re-Animator* didn't have to wait long to receive digital treatment. Both films included an impressive amount of special features, which was an extra treat with any film released during DVD's early years (now such features are considered par for the course). Films which have been unavailable for purchase, or just impossible to find and rent (thanks to the growing chain of family-friendly Blockbuster-like video stores, which were running out the Mom and Pop shops that lived off the horror-fan's dime) were becoming more accessible as studios could turn a buck on any release they could rush out. *Dead Alive*, *Basketcase*, *Re-Animator* and other classics found larger audiences thanks to this new platform, and with the new



Re-Animator theatrical US one-sheet (Version B)

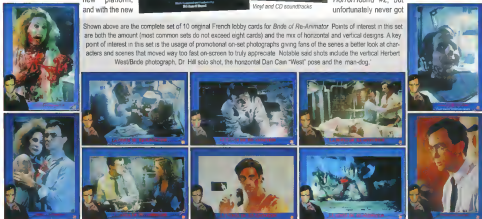
Jason Barry), seeking out a chance to work with Herbert West. Obtaining a job at the prison where West is serving his time, the doctor teams-up with West (via a secret laboratory) to find out exactly what the syringe held. As per usual, the re-agent leads to another unfortunate bout of the crazed undead destroying everything surrounding Herbert West (not to mention noteworthy moments featuring a severed re-animated penis and a rat-like warden who undergoes some interesting transformations). The film ended with a door-opening sequence, which allows any fan of the series to guess where good old Doctor West will end up next.

Stuart Gordon has mentioned numerous times that he hopes Dr. West will find himself in the White House, re-animating the president after an unfortunate accident (the project was set to film in 2007, as initially reported in *HorrorHound* #2, but unfortunately never got



Vinyl and CD soundtracks

Shown above are the complete set of 10 original French lobby cards for *Bride of Re-Animator*. Points of interest in this set are both the amount (most common sets do not exceed eight cards) and the mix of horizontal and vertical designs. A key point of interest in this set is the usage of promotional on-set photographs giving fans of the series a better look at characters and scenes that moved way too fast on-screen to truly appreciate. Notable said shots include the vertical Herbert West/Bride photograph, Dr. Hill solo shot, the horizontal Dan Cain "West" pose and the man-dog.





off the ground) The question is how or who, will fund the next installment, as "Beyond" had run into its own troubles and unable to find US theatrical distribution. It was edited down and premiered on the Sci-Fi cable channel before being released a few months later on DVD – not exactly a stellar record for such a distinguished horror title. Jeffrey Combs has kept busy over the years with bit parts and roles in films such as *Paranormalia* and *Return to House on Haunted Hill* and Stuart Gordon has been directing hard-hitting cult thrillers such as *Stuck* and *Edmond*



With the collectible horror scene at an all-time high, fans have been more curious when we could see Herbert West action figures, lunch boxes, statues or busts released for the series. Dynamite Entertainment gave Herbert West a job in the four-issue comic book mini-series: *Army of Darkness* vs. *Re-Animator* at the end of '05. This imaginative team-up played heavily on the Lovecraftian elements, mixing the character of Herbert West with Ash's never-ending struggle with the Necronomicon. While mildy



Original inside of *Re-Animator* theatrical US one-sheet

successful in the world of comics, the series (which made a big impact upon arrival) sputtered out into a questionable release pattern before it was wrapped up. It seems no matter how great a place West finds himself, a road block always seems to appear. Two more series followed by Zenescope Entertainment and Devil's Due Publishing, however, were met with similar release problems (see sidebar). With the comic book resurgence of the license done and over, what of the other possibilities? Failed attempts at producing Herbert West action figures also failed to get off the ground. With no movement in licensing or on the screen, one has to beg the question when the devoted doctor will find his way back into the spotlight



In 2009 it was announced that a *Re-Animator* television series was being planned (possibly for MTV or the Syfy Network). The story was set to bring Herbert West back as "a teenage Dr. Frankenstein for the new millennium." The series would have introduced a "monster of the week" theme, similar to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in which West's experiments would wreck havoc on Meskatomki University campus. After a pilot was reportedly shot, and cast photos released, very little news has leaked of the show's future prospects

Outside of this potential TV series, a remake has



Above: Rare adventure comic collection booklet featuring *Re-Animator* cover and comic, as well as *Adventure's* three-issue *Re-Animator*, four-issue *Daem* of the *Re-Animator* and *Tales of Herbert West* comic books

Home Video timeline

From the original VHS release in 1986 to the DVD release of *Beyond Re-Animator* (2003), the Herbert West saga has always been readily available at home video. Below is a look at the major releases from the series, including VHS, laserdisc and DVD. Collectors wanting more bang for their buck should check out the Anchor Bay Edition DVD (2007) and the rare out of print 2001 *Bride* release



Quotable Quotes: "He's a wife-beater, Dan – use the gun!" – Jeffrey Combs (*Bride of Re-Animator*)

HorrorHound 11



Dynasty Entertainment presented an *Army of Darkness* vs. *Re-Animator* comic series. While not meant to further the film adventures of Herbert West, the Lovecraft-tinged character does make a significant appearance.

been rumored for years, with the latest (and most interesting) being that Brian Yuzna has possible plans to unleash a reboot — in 3-D.

Regardless, it has been 25 years since Herbert West's introduction into cinema and fans still remember fondly the carnage he instilled on theatergoers. It is time for more gore!

An Interview with Jeffrey Combs • by Paul Davis

"I gave him life!" said West ... or rather said Jeffrey Combs, the actor who literally brought the character of Dr. Herbert West to life in Stuart Gordon's timeless splatterfest, *Re-Animator*. After 25 years and two sequels, the *Re-Animator* fan base is still going strong and foaming at the mouth for further adventures of Herbert West and his trusty hypodermic re-agent. However, with the current influx of '70s and '80s horror remakes taking the torch and leading the genre into previously chartered territories, could this enduring classic of the genre suffer a similar fate? Or has West got some bigger fish to pull out of the fryer?

I had the pleasure of sitting down with Jeffrey Combs to discuss his experience on the original film and dish the dirt on a possible third *Re-Animator* sequel that could pitch Dr. West his most challenging task to date, well, besides getting his re-agent to actually work without the bloody smorgasbord of hilariously gory side effects [Editor's note: The following interview was originally given, and published in 2006 as part of the now sold-out issue of *HorrorHound* #2.]



BRIDE OF
RE-ANIMATOR
the



HorrorHound: Were you familiar with the works of H.P. Lovecraft before you came onto *Re-Animator*?

Jeffrey Combs: Umm... no. I went to the audition and the director Stuart Gordon said, "You know this is based on H.P. Lovecraft?" and like an actor would, I bullshitted by way of "Oh yeah... cool." But I didn't really know who Lovecraft was. Since then, I've read some Lovecraft and gotten to be more familiar with his work. I don't know if it really mattered at the time whether or not I was an aficionado of Lovecraft, and I certainly had no idea that this movie would sort of weld me.

HH: I suppose it did weld you to a degree as you're now regarded as "the" Lovecraftian actor. After you landed the role of Herbert West, did being splashed with 25 gallons of blood taint the experience of playing your first staming role?

JC: Actually, it was kind of wet and sticky. So all I remember was when it started to dry, it became kind of like taffy or caramelized, and the way to sort of loosen it up was to spray it with a little water underneath so it would come back to life, so to speak; but yeah, it's not too comfortable. It's kind of a strange thing to be on a set for hours and hours with blood because in the movies something that takes 15 seconds takes half a day to shoot sometimes and more so if it's a special effect or some-



Since the third film in the *Re-Animator* series saw very little theatrical distribution (mostly in foreign markets) the fact that lobby cards for the film are even available is sheer luck. This is a Spanish set of eight lobby cards for *Bride of Re-Animator* showcasing Herbert West himself, Jeffrey Combs and the bloody femme fatale Elisa Patsky.



Audio book: Jeffrey Combs reads Robert Wise's *Re-Animator*

thing. So for that little bit of time on screen, it starts to get extremely tedious.

HH: It does look like you had a blast filming the original movie though. There must be some fond memories attached to that shoot

JC: Absolutely. Working with Bruce Abbott and making those scenes between Dan and Herbert really come to life and have that snooty and humor between them. Those were my favorite times during the filming – just having a great time with a really good actor.

HH: There definitely was an unforgettable chemistry between you two in first two movies, something that was clearly missed in *Beyond Re-Animator*.

JC: Yes it was, although at the same time Dan couldn't really be in that story, but Jason Barry who was sort of his prototype in that movie has become a real good friend of mine. He is a really fine young actor. Having said that, we are gearing up to do another *Re-Animator*. The plan is that Bruce Abbott will be coming back to finish the Dan Cain story off

HH: That's right. Stuart Gordon has discussed on several occasions that Herbert West may be going to the White House

JC: That is correct. It will be called *House of Re-Animator* and somebody in the White House who can't be allowed to die, well... dies, so Herbert is tracked down and brought to a state-of-the-art facility underneath The White House to re-animate our leader. A pretty clever idea. I think and kind of tongue in cheek.

HH: I am actually really excited for this project to come together. I nearly wet myself when I heard about it for the first time. It is an ingenious direction to take the franchise in and all the while keeping it fresh.

JC: Yeah, it is a good idea. Our only concern is that initially Stuart [Gordon], who's going to direct it, wanted it to be Bush, Cheney, Rice, and I thought (and I think Brian Yuzna did too) that it doesn't make it universal or it puts it in a snap shot of the time we live in now and it doesn't allow the film to be purely for entertainment sake. It makes it too topical and I don't think that a *Re-Animator* movie should do the same job as a Michael Moore documentary and attack the system. I don't think politics and



Promotional *Beyond Re-Animator* movie poster

HH: That is very sneaky. I haven't seen the comic myself, only the front cover that features a rather stylized version of Ash from *Army of Darkness*, so I can only assume that they went for an all out stylized approach to avoid likeness issues. Now, I'm going to put you in a hypothetical situation. You get a phone call from Brian Yuzna and he tells you that a *Re-Animator* remake is on the way. What would be your initial reaction?

JC: "Ok and why are you calling me? I'm too old." You know, that may not be too far from hypothetical. I think that Brian told me at some point someone had called enquiring about obtaining the rights for a remake of *Re-Animator*

HH: Seriously?

JC: Well, they're remaking everything else, so is it really that surprising? But what would have happened is that Brian would have lost all chance of ever making another sequel of any kind. When you sell the rights, you get money but that's it. I also think that if they do a remake, it won't be as successful. One of my favorite movies is Robert Wise's *The Haunting*. They remade it and it sucks! They put in all this CGI, I mean the whole point of original movie is that you don't see anything, and then in the remake you see it all and you don't care. Of course in *Re-Animator* you see it all but it was all done with not a single frame of CGI. It was all clever editing, physical, illusionary tricks and when/if they do a remake, you know it's going to be CGI'd to death. I have no problem with CGI, I love CGI, but I think it's like a spice on the shelf. It's like ketchup, if you put ketchup



Race Herbert West goes red, featuring a rare Jeffrey Combs signed endorsement



Promotional *Beyond Re-Animator* movie program booklet



Comic Mess Herbert West has appeared in various comics throughout the years, and each seems to get more and more confusing than the last. Devil's Due Publishing's *Hack/Slash* saw a three-issue crossover with Dr. West, which meant to feature Jeffrey Combs' film character. Without proper permissions, the story was pulled from mass distribution. Zenescope's three-issue series from 2009, however, avoided such issues by blatantly going off the writings of H.P. Lovecraft, avoiding issues over film rights altogether.



At left is the Anchor Bay Collection DVD for *Re-Animator* released in 2007. A specially-packed set included a green-syringe pen featuring the *Re-Animator* logo.



on everything, then everything is going to taste like ketchup. Just a little bit is good, but they seem to have gotten to a point now where they feel CGI is the only thing putting asses in seats.

HH: I agree. A movie like *Land of the Dead* used very little CGI and what they did use went hand

in hand with the mechanical effects that were showcased on set.

HH: With that said, why do you think *Re-Animator* still holds its own as a true classic of the horror genre?



JC: That's a good question. Well, I think you need not look any further than the classic 'Frankenstein' concept. When Lovecraft wrote that story, he didn't like it very much. It was a serial story; he wrote chapters and he was just doing it to make some quick money. He didn't regard it as his best work by a long shot, but it does echo Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the noble notion of bringing the dead back to life and immortality. So it really delves into a need to live forever which we all sort of ache for. At the same time, however, it had an outrageous sort of over the top explosion of blood which made it almost an art form. And if you think about the movie, it's this little nucleus of characters that get on this inevitable path toward an outrageous climax. I think it's also a classic melodrama if you think about Meg as being the damsel in distress on the railroad track, with the smelly whiplash lopping over her as she gets saved at the last minute.

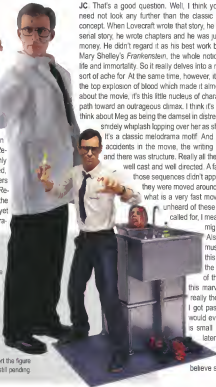
It's a classic melodrama motif. And I think there are a lot of happy accidents in the movie, the writing was quite clean and excellent, and there was structure. Really all the actors were great in the movie, well cast and well directed. A fabulous editor because some of those sequences didn't appear that way in the script and so they were moved around a little bit to adjust the pace for what is a very fast movie. It was 86 minutes, which is unheard of these days, but that is what the story called for, I mean if it would have been longer it might not have had the same impact.

Also the very tongue-in-cheek music score is another ingredient in this collaborative effort that made the *Re-Animator* soup delicious. All of these little factors added up into this marvelous little movie that nobody really thought anything of. I mean when I got past it, I honestly thought nobody would ever see this movie, *Re-Animator* is small art. Yet here we are 25 years later, so it's really quite remarkable that it is regarded as highly as it is and it's hard for me to believe sometimes.

JC: Absolutely. I mean that's another thing I think fans love about *Re-Animator*: the physical tricks with special effects and editing that had audiences asking, "How do they do that?" Ah I get it! The other really key ingredient to the success of *Re-Animator* was that it came out unrated. If they had gone to the ratings board, I would not be here talking about the movie today. They knew in order to make something that was outrageous enough to be noticed, they would not have to play by the rating rules. I don't know if anybody has come across an R-rated version, but you know how R-rated is. *Re-Animator* came out unrated, they just put it out. Only problem with that of course is that the release is limited, only a handful of theaters will take it and newspapers won't print ads with any visuals what so ever. *Re-Animator* defied all of that due to word of mouth and the rise of video. Then with the advent of DVD technology yet another generation sees this movie and it's still an out-

Re-Animated Action Figures

In the past four years, there have been a couple attempts to create a Herbert West — *Re-Animator* action figure in both 7" and 12" scales. In 2006, SOTA Toys unveiled a 7" scale figure of West, which was set to come with Dr. Hill's head in a pan, as well as a work area and re-animated cat. Sadly, the figure was one of many casualties of the industry nosedive thanks to increased production costs in oils (West joined a Killer Klowm, Leproschian and Terrors figures in the realm of oil cancellation). In 2009, AMOK Toys revealed plans to distribute a special 12" figure of Herbert West, in conjunction with many similarly scaled figures they had produced (which includes *Night of the Living Dead* and *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*). Sadly, pre-sales were not strong enough to support the figure going into mass-production ... the possibility of its release is still pending.





H.P. Lovecraft's
RE-ANIMATOR



H.P. Lovecraft's
**BRIDE OF
RE-ANIMATOR**

HorrorHound Weekend Cincinnati, OH Nov. 12-14 2010

Born in 1930, Bill Blair grew up in Eufaula, a small farming community in rural Oklahoma, about as far from the bright lights of Hollywood as the twister in *The Wizard of Oz*. From the time he was a young boy, he loved movies and just about everything to do with the picture business. While still in school, he raised enough money through odd jobs to buy a secondhand film projector and a few 16mm movie prints, which he would show to the locals in a makeshift tent theater on warm summer nights. This was his initial foray into the movie business.

By 1960, Blair (now married and living in Tulsa) had built an extra room on the back of the family home to house his expanding collection of movies. What started as a hobby soon became a little side business which became United Films. In the days before the VHS Boom! spawned thousands of Blockbuster Videos, redboxes and the Netflix service, there were only a few non-theatrical 16mm movie distributors. They provided reels of entertainment to the select group of rabid movie fans, who were able to install the first true home theaters, and the institutional customers – mostly churches, schools and colleges – that frequently sponsored movie nights.

Blair grew up during Hollywood's hey day, when movie theaters were picture palaces and for about a quarter, a boy could spend his Saturday at the matinee watching newsreels, a cartoon, a serial chapter and a double feature, with a western shoot-'em-up followed by a gangster or war film, plus a bag of popcorn and a soda if he were really lucky, the theater might show one of the monster films from Universal or Columbia.

Blair never forgot that early exposure to horror films, and the thrills and chills they stirred in his soul stayed with him long after. As did other boys of that time, he also became a big fan of the many serials that played a chapter at a time, with the inevitable cliffhanger endings followed by the sudden graphic exclamation – "Return Next Week to this Same Theater and See Chapter 3 – Captured by Shark Men!"

or something equally incredible. Comic-strip-to-silver-screen hero Flash Gordon was a particular serial favorite and action idol Buster Crabbe, who played Flash, had to be the greatest movie star of all time! I guess it was inevitable that Blair would one day cross paths with Crabbe, and they would become close friends and colleagues.

By 1970, United Films was the undisputed leader in the number of horror pictures acquired and distributed non-theatrically. The library was fully stocked with titles starting from the silent era, like *Nocturnal*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Favorites like the Universal monster classics: *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Wolfman* were there too. Plus the entire output of the incredibly prolific American International Pictures (AIP), with nightmare-inducing titles such as *Scream and Scream Again*, *Spirits of the Dead*, *Premature Burial* and *The Pit* and the

Pendulum – and that barely scratches the surface! Horror, science fiction, mystery, and fantasy genres became such a priority for Blair's United Films that they began to publish a specialty catalog titled *50 Years of Devils, Demons and Monsters*. This yearly tome contained hundreds of the best films the genre had to offer, including titles from Warner Brothers (e.g., *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*, *Wat Until Dark*) and Columbia (e.g., *Berserk!* and *The Stepford Wives*). Many of the best independent productions of the day were also represented by United Films, such as *Son of the Blob*, *The Corpse Grinders* and *Don't Look in the Basement*.

It was at about this time that Blair began to think seriously about producing his own films. Distributing the AIP products had given him the idea to take more control of his company's destiny by getting involved in the production side of the business. Those dreams of producing films would happen a few years down the road, however, there were some other new opportunities about to present themselves.

Around 1970, Blair finally met his boyhood movie hero, Buster Crabbe. Blair had acquired the distribution rights to several serials, including his own childhood favorite, the trilogy of *Flash Gordon* titles produced by Universal between 1936 and 1940. As much as he cared for those classic serials, it still came as somewhat of a surprise that the *Flash Gordon* series became a hit in the non-theatrical market, as younger movie fans discovered the sheer fun of these thrilling cliffhangers! Whether it was because of their campy appeal or their fantastic action-packed plotlines, the *Flash Gordon* serials found a very appreciative new audience, especially on college campuses. Before long, many of the college film-study programs were asking how they could arrange for Buster Crabbe to speak at their campus on the subject of *Flash Gordon* and the "Golden Age of Hollywood." Blair happily tracked down his hero, and after a brief introduction and a persuasive explanation of what he was after, he had Buster gungho to meet a new generation of fans. This led to a very successful college speaking tour for *Flash Gordon*. Buster and Bill became close friends after this and the two vowed they were going to make a movie together.

Several developing technologies became available in 1975, as Sony and other electronics companies were inventing new video tape formats, cameras and recording equipment that were capable of replacing film, all of which were particularly useful to the broadcast television business. Cable television was also beginning to grow very rapidly, and they were hungry for entertainment, especially movies. Blair recognized that this new video technology could be adapted for non-theatrical use which would allow United Films to expand its distribution into the new cable TV business by simply transferring its film library to video tape. Blair proceeded to build a small video studio, with lights, video cameras and all the other equipment necessary to put United Films into the video production business.

It didn't take long before it became apparent that the





new video side of the business required special attention. In 1976, it spun off into a separate company christened Video Communications, Inc. (or VCI). It was at about this time that Sony introduced the Betamax video cassette recorder, and the consumer product single-handedly set into motion the greatest change the entertainment business had ever witnessed. The power began to grudgingly shift away from the motion picture and television industries to the consumer, and the home video business was born. Blair recognized this opportunity instantly, and VCI was there, willing and able to participate in this new business from the very start. Within a few months, VCI had released a couple hundred titles on Beta I videocassettes (and even some on U-Matic cassettes), followed soon by VHS videocassettes, and not to forget - Beta II videocassettes. The fledgling home video business soon began to develop true home video stores as video rentals were quickly becoming the preferred form of exchange.

The decade of the '80s witnessed a literal explosion of growth in the home video business, as the number of VCRs continued their march across America and into the homes of entertainment-starved consumers. The rapidly increasing household VCR penetration rates caused a new "gold rush" as savvy entrepreneurs opened video stores on practically every street corner in the US - heck, the home video revolution swept over the whole world. This was the most flourishing period of the video store, and every new one that opened its doors needed hundreds, perhaps thousands of movies to stock their shelves. And they bought everything. During this early phase, the major studios were all still trying to figure out whether they wanted to promote the new video business or to stomp it to death! Subsequently, the independent video suppliers, (which included VCI by this time), were experiencing their glory days.

It was during this time frame that Blair and VCI learned a very important marketing lesson. During the early days of home video, VCI concentrated heavily on purchasing and distributing classic movies. The company made some very important acquisitions, including one with the famous Hollywood producer Samuel Bronston, which netted *El Cid*, *55 Days at Peking*, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* and *Circus World*. A few years later, Blair made a deal directly with the legendary producer Hal Wallis (Casablanca) and purchased all rights, including the negative, to his Academy Award Winner - *Becket*. It was this milestone acquisition which provided the earth-shattering epiphany that would alter the course of VCI and its place in the history of home video.

VCI was of course very proud to be associated with such a classy motion picture, let alone having the right to release it on Beta and VHS cassettes, and diligently went about the process of setting up for its home video debut. As was the custom then (and even still today), this new release would coincide with three or four other titles which would be available for video stores to purchase at the same

time. I can't remember what the other titles were, but *The Toolbox Murders* is the one that I'll never forget. Ignoring the fact that VCI had a deep-seated appreciation of the horror genre, this title after all was not a classic (at that time). In fact, it came as part of a larger package of titles thought to be more important. On pre-order day, *The Toolbox Murders* generated over five times the number of orders for the prestigious *Becket* - and the orders kept rolling in. From that day forward, VCI knew it wasn't just okay to embrace its love of the horror genre, but it was also cool! The video market had made its preference known - they loved horror movies, and it appeared, the bloodier and gorier, the better!

At the end of 1983, VCI entered into an experimental distribution deal with Media Home Entertainment, another fast-growing indie video company, if you are reading this article, I'm sure you recognize the name. That combination lasted less than six months. VCI was still looking to improve its distribution and almost immediately after the Media deal ended, formed another partnership with a new video startup, United Entertainment, Inc. (UEI). UEI (later known as United Home Video) handled distribution chores for VCI, and allow Blair to pursue his dream of actually producing movies. With distribution in place, Blair was ready to prove a theory he had been developing. He believed that a movie could be released straight to the home video market, bypassing the theatrical market entirely and still be a success. Profitability could be assured by keeping the production budget small and by controlling distribution to the video stores.

Chris and Linda Lewis were living in Tulsa. Chris, the son of actress Loretta Young and producer/writer Tom Lewis, was an anchor at one of the local TV stations while Linda was involved in video production and marketing. Blair had been friends with the couple and approached them with his idea of producing a low-budget movie. Blair had a rough draft of a story that he had developed a few years earlier for the movie that was intended to feature his childhood hero, Buster Crabbe. Buster was to play the starring role of a small-town sheriff who was investigating a series of brutal murders on a college campus, however, sadly he died in 1983. Chris asked what the budget was, and when Blair answered he burst into laughter. Then he thought for a minute, regained some composure and said, "Well, we'll have to shoot it on video, and we'll have to shoot it really fast!" A few months later, on September 30, 1985 to be exact, *Blood Cuts* - the first movie made for the home video market - came to video stores. *Blood Cuts* was a success. Some might say a disgusting success! The over-the-top (for the time) special effects and bloody, gooey gore hit the mark with a big segment of the video market and the market wanted more!

Blair and the Lewis team formed United Entertainment Pictures, and from there began production on their next film - *The Ripper*. With a slight increase in





the budget, the gore factor doubled and the star power was enhanced by adding makeup artist extraordinaire Tom Savini in the titular role (one which I'm told Mr. Savini regrets to this very day). The budget on the third film was increased enough to shoot an actual film and to even hire a couple of real Hollywood actors. *Revenge*, aka *Blood Cult 2*, featured Patrick Wayne, the son of John Wayne, in the starring role with a special appearance by horror legend John Cardinale. All three were hits for the company.

Blair later financed and produced some other genre movies that went straight to home video without the Lewins team, including *The Terror at Tenkiller* (1986), *The Last Slumber Party* (1987), the sci-fi tinged *Forever Evil* (1987), and the mystery-thriller *Murder Rap* (1987), which introduced John Hawkes in the leading role. By the end of 1988, Blair had parted ways with UEL, and VCI regained control of its video distribution. Blair's last feature-length production, *The Killing Device* (1989), was an action/adventure film, which broke completely out of the horror genre and was his only film produced on 35mm.

VCI entered the digital age of entertainment in 1999, a couple of years after the big studios, but used that downtime to study the emerging DVD market, and were able to avoid the problems that plagued some of the other small studios and early adopters of this new digital medium. It became apparent early on that a video company could not start cranking out DVDs just by recycling their old VHS masters. No consumer format before it could compare, and all of a sudden, the quality of picture and sound presentation was being scrutinized like nothing before. Bill Blair was always concerned about the quality of his product and using the most complete prints available for mastering, however, this new digital format was raising the bar to new heights. After several years of outsourcing most of his DVD authoring and production, Blair made a total commitment to DVD and decided to build his own video restoration and authoring department. The company is now recognized regularly for the quality of its classic DVD restorations.

VCI's first DVD release was a safe one, being the company's best selling title of all time, *A Christmas Carol* (1951). The second DVD was another best-seller, the little student film-turned real movie that became a cult classic – *Dark Star* – from John (Haloween) Carpenter and Dan (Alien) O'Bannon.

Many horror movie fans delight in discovering those lost and forgotten genre

treasures from years past that are resurrected from obscurity every once in a while. VCI's unwritten mission has been to release as many of these under-appreciated and sometimes orphaned films of all genres, as it possibly can. Some might ask, "Who else would champion the release of a pair of Romero exploitation classics?" like *Twilight People* and *Beyond Atlantis* (that's Eddie Romero, not George)

from the days when drive-in theaters ruled. Or *The Devil's Rain*, featuring John Travolta's first screen appearance, might have remained a mystery, if not for VCI's diligent efforts. And speaking of lost little treasures, can a made-for-TV horror movie actually be any good? To answer that question, you needn't look farther than at a couple of other rare VCI discoveries, starting with *Gargoyles* (1972) and one of VCI's most current DVD releases, *Dark Night of the Scarecrow* (1981). These two little TV movies prove that the small screen can produce some big screen chills.

But seriously – VCI has released its share of iconic classics like Mario Bava's *Blood and Black Lace* and Dario Argento's *Bird with a Crystal Plumage*, which would be standouts in any horror collection. And the restoration of *City of the Dead* (1950) returned 10 minutes of footage not seen in the original American release titled *Horror Hotel*, not to mention the DVD features a commentary and interview with star Christopher Lee. Speaking of Mr. Lee, *Whip and the Body*, another Bava masterpiece, was rescued from its mutilated and abbreviated form – with the dumbest ever re-title and presented on DVD for the first time in an uncut, widescreen version. And before Max von Sydow appeared in

The Exorcist, he made his American movie debut in *The Night Visitor*, a genuine thriller that adds a touch of class to the lineup.

This was only a brief history of VCI, and I may have bounced around a little too much, hopefully you were able to follow along. I do have to admit, it was fun for me to ruminate on the history of VCI. Please forgive any unconscious self-aggrandizement. However, if you enjoy watching a good classic horror movie in your own home theater, or you are happy to be able to rent the latest made-for-video DVD from Netflix, and especially, if you have a soft place in your heart for that guilty little pleasure

you derive from watching independently produced horror films, and all those old "Video Nasties" – then please give a little salute with your remote control to Bill Blair and VCI. 🍷



30 YEARS OF MANIAC

by Matt Moore

Throughout the annals of cinema, there are certain films which have created an atmosphere only relatable to the culture of its time. This may be the case with *Maniac*'s portrayal of New York City the early 1980s. This true-life gritty world was filled with escalating murder rates, gang and drug-related violence, and rape — there were no happy moments at the end of the night in this town. And what laid within these city borders was more nightmarish than anything filmmakers could put on the screen. And while most filmmakers of the 1980s used a sugar-coated outlook of the city, William Lustig showed us the disturbing reality check, an anti-Woody Allen peek into New York... so to speak.

William Lustig's entries into the art of film included *Maniac Cop* and *Vigilante* as well as *Maniac* — his debut into the exploitation side of the horror genre. *Maniac* was an expose of a new phenomena gaining mass interest in New York and across the United States — the rise of the serial-killer subgenre. *Maniac* touched the fans in a way no other movie had or would again until John McNaughton's 1985 film *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. Lead actor and co-writer, Joe Spinell, did a great deal of research on serial murderers of the time and was able to create a flawless portrayal of a monster — a monster that could live next door to you.

The Story

Maniac follows the lonely life of Frank Zito. A devoted son, even after his mother's passing (in an almost Ed Gein fashion), Frank speaks to visions of his mother as he is reminded of the fear-induced lessons she taught him growing up. But, Frank has a very dark side — one that rears its ugly head at night, when the "naughty girls" go out to play. He must punish his female victims, finishing each off with a brutal scalping. Frank collects his victims' scalps like trophies and proudly displays them on mannequins he poses throughout his apartment... guests of his humble abode.

We follow Frank through his murderous life and are treated to some of the most vicious sequences ever caught on film, such as the scene with "Disco Boy," aka Tom Savini, as he tries to get his rocks off with a girl from a club. His lady friend sees someone while they're making out in the backseat of his



car and cuts the night short... a cock-blocked Savini gets in the driver's seat and starts up the car just in time to see the "demon," Zito, as he jumps on the car's hood and turns Savini's head into fireworks — with his trusty shogun.

Frank soon comes across Anna (a fashion photographer played by the gorgeous Caroline Munro) while stalking around a park. Out of this act of possible lunacy a relationship develops, but Frank's dark ways weren't as easy to curb as he hoped and he continues down his murderous path, even taking out one of Anna's leading models. Rita. Frank's inner life soon makes itself known upon a visit to his mother's grave as Rita's demise is revealed to Anna. Taking actions into her own hands, she escapes Frank, wounding him in the process. Fleeting from the scene, Frank's mind begins to deteriorate fast and his delusions start becoming reality in one of the film's most putridly gore-filled moments when Frank dreams that all of his mannequins take human forms (in the shape of his victims), joining together to tear him apart!

Maniac endured its fair share of problems while in production. The most significant matter was the project's funding which diminished partially through production. Thankfully, the heroine of the film came to the rescue in real life; Caroline Munro's beau (at the time) made an investment in the production and the film was back on the road to release. These additional funds allowed the team to create a better-quality film than what was originally anticipated with the initial budget.

Maniac was filmed in a very guerilla-warfare style — in semi-secluded areas without permits and with random shots taken as Joe Spinell and a cameraman traveled around by foot. Regardless of the rough filming method, *Maniac* delivered a rare glimpse into the life and mind of a serial killer. What may have made Spinell's character more intense was the fact that he was based on serial killers of the time. "A lot of it was based on research Joe had done," director William Lustig recently shared with *HorrorHound*, "but he definitely found influences of serial killers from the '70s. In particular, Gacy, Berkowitz and probably a couple others. This was pre-internet of course, so he did a lot of research at the library. He really did his homework on it."

The gore shots, delivered amazingly by the legendary Tom Savini, blew the minds of fans and critics — one to the point of repulsion as famed film reviewer Gene Siskel got up and walked out of the screening of *Maniac* he attended. It was one of only three movies he ever walked out of in his career (Fun fact: the other two were *The Million Dollar Duck* (1971) and *Black Sheep* (1996).)

The Controversy

Maniac, aside from the gore, was probably best remembered for the controversial issues facing its theatrical release. After Siskel and Ebert called for an all-out ban of the film, feminist groups from





around the country united to protest the film, citing that it portrayed an abusive and violent nature aimed towards women. Maniac did of course have a higher female body count, but to its credit, feminists failed to recognize the liberating power at the conclusion of the film with the heroine taking out the killer and the female victims tearing him apart in his bed (even though it was a delusion of the killer, it still portrayed a revenge-style end to the carnage he enacted upon women).

The film suffered through a second battle, this time over its one-sheet poster. Most every horror fan has seen the image of the

armed man standing in a pool of blood with a scalp in hand, but some "lans" at the time may have seen a little something more... a shadow area near the crotch that gave the appearance of the killer's arousal. This set off a fire storm with feminist groups and some theater owners who didn't want to display this now-obscene one-sheet, therefore, an alternate poster was quickly produced—a solid black poster with the logo in red. This poster, rare nowadays, helped to keep Maniac on the screen and flack off the theaters for a little while.



However, the controversy did not end there because of the film's gory content. The buckets of blood on-screen offended and grossed out such a large amount of people that a R-rated cut was released to theaters which featured pretty much all the gore removed except for a few spots of blood here or there—but nowhere near the amount the uncensored prints were showing in other cinema houses across the nation.

The Sequel

After the overall success of Maniac at the box office, Lustig and Spinell planned to continue

the carnage that began in 1980 with a sequel. Even going as far as to make a small trailer and deciding upon a title—Maniac 2: Mr. Robbie—the story was meant to follow a more punisher/angel-of-vengeance path where a TV host would read letters from adolescent fans, discovering that some of his fans had problems lurking deeper than just not getting what they wanted for Christmas. The host would seek out those who hurt these children (in the trailer we see the demise of one child abuser)—had this movie been made it would have probably rivaled other revenge flicks of the time... Sadly, due to the lack of funding,



this project never made it past the trailer stage. However, there is a cool collectible out there—the information sheet on Maniac 2 which is bright red with white text and features a brief synopsis of the proposed film and cast.

Maniac was Joe Spinell at his best, his Frank Zito was delivered in a way no other actor could have, and because of this Maniac remains to this day, repulses and disturbs even the most seasoned horror fans. "I don't think Maniac would exist if it weren't for Joe Spinell," Lustig added, while reflecting on the film. "I think Tom Savini created some really inter-

esting effects. Jay Chataway's score was pretty original for a horror film. I think there was a lot of really strong elements but all of it would not have worked. Joe was the glue that made all those pieces come together. If anything, I am most proud of Joe, and working with Joe and the work we did together. He was there from inception. It was a collaboration, but he was the driving force behind it." On top of Spinell's chilling work, the film's subject matter and gritty realism are something that will live on—sure to horrify us for another 30-plus years to come... and remember, he warned you.



A collection of Maniac home videos, including VHS, DVD and Blu-ray (from an assortment of companies: Media, Elite, Anchor Bay and Blue Underground)

Fun Fact: Maniac's famous one-sheet poster is so popular that other filmmakers have homaged it over the years, including Eli Roth (*Hostel II*) and Ryan Nicholson (*Gutterballs*).

FANTASM

COLLECTOR'S SPOTLIGHT: Paul Mallick

In every issue of *HorrorHound Magazine* we print letters, artwork, tattoos, and photographs of tattoos and collections from various readers! All you have to do to have your pics featured (just like Paul Mallick - who generously submitted these amazing photos from his collection) is send us an e-mail! Make sure you send hires images (clear shots please) and include your name, a photo of yourself and a brief note about who you are and what you collect! We are always looking for fun photos to run in *HorrorHound* - so send your shots in today!



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UNDER THE MASK

GHOSTBUSTERS
by Eric Newell

It's sort of an odd thing, glancing at the attendee photos on the official site for November 2010's HorrorHound Weekend in Cincinnati, and seeing two familiar faces with two very unfamiliar names underneath them. Scroll down the page a bit and you'll see a pair of the most recognizable villains from the 1980s. Those faces are of "Slimer," and the "Staypuft Marshmallow Man," both from Ivan Reitman's 1984 classic *Ghostbusters*. The surprising part is seeing the names of the puppeteers responsible for bringing them to life, Mark Wilson and Billy Bryan, respectively, beneath the familiar visages from the film.

I suppose it has something to do with the seamless way the effects were created, but you just don't tend to think about the guy in the Staypuft suit, or the poor puppeteer inside Slimer having food thrown down the back of his shirt while filming the infamous "food cart" scene. Still, horror fans have a special understanding and appreciation for the hard work it takes to create horrifying special effects, so I already know it will take little prompting for them to hop in line for their autographs... written, presumably, in Ectoplasm.

Thanks in part to the rise of digital special effects, the skills these men possess are quickly becoming a lost art. Having been lucky enough to be in their prime during the 1980s, both had the chance to ply their trade while creating some of the most memorable abominations in film history. Back then, designing creature effects was an intensely tactile profession. While working on films such as *Ghostbusters*, *Thriller*, *Fright Night*, *Army of Darkness*, *Dune*, *Big Trouble in Little China*... along with countless others, both effects wizards had the chance to hone their skills. They did so with a myriad of tools: plaster, foam, makeup, plastic bags, glue and many other unsuspecting household items.

We caught up with both men recently to learn a little more about their careers and the men under the masks.

Billy Bryan (resume includes: *Ghostbusters*, *Dune*, *Army of Darkness*, *Return of the Living Dead*, *Metropolis*)

HorrorHound So, what first sparked your love for special effects?

Billy Bryan When I was a kid, my older brother was interested in makeup effects and the old classic horror films. I enjoyed seeing how it was done,

though I was deemed to young to be allowed see the movies. When I was 13, I saw a show by Jim Henson showing how Muppets were made. I started making puppets then, and continued making foam costumes and sculptures after that.

HH How did you get your break in the industry?

BB I made a plant costume for a college friend for a class project at Syracuse University. When the project, a plant-food commercial, was being shot, Dick Tufeld (who voiced the *Lost in Space* robot) was present. The director of the spot asked him, "So, Mr. Tufeld, is there a place for me in Hollywood?" He responded, "No, but there's a place for the guy who made that costume!"

I arrived in Los Angeles a few months later, contacted Dick Tufeld, and he gave me a few suggestions which eventually led to my first job - in the NBC Wardrobe Department, making props and costumes for commercials, sitcoms and *The Tonight Show*.

HH Can you point to a specific experience on a Hollywood set as your favorite?

BB There have been so many, but playing the Staypuft Marshmallow Man ranks among the best. Also, when Steven Spielberg said my alien in *Men in Black* was his favorite, I felt validated. And there were great moments during the shooting of *Species* that I'll never forget, helping Natasha Henstridge with her "birth" scene.

HH What was it like going one on one with Bruce Campbell as "The Pit Witch" in *Army of Darkness*?

BB I met Bruce Campbell on the first of my two shooting days, as I was about to be hoisted into the air on wires for the tumbling gag. He suggested, "If you need to get down, just tell them you're going to be sick." At first I dismissed this advice, but when I was having trouble tumbling, I followed his suggestion. Once back on terra firma, they adjusted the pick-points, hauled me back up, and we got the shot with no more difficulty.

The next day, in the pit, once again in costume, I stood in a niche in the wall as they stapled burlap over the opening and smeared mud all over it. Then I waited, standing in the dark, with muddy water up to my knees for an hour and a half, while they finished lighting and setting up the camera. Then Sam Rami shouted, "Come out, Monster Bill!" I burst through the burlap and slashed menacingly toward Bruce. The rest of the shots were completed in short order - getting my hand cut off by Bruce's chainsaw, grabbing Bruce's ankle and getting crushed by the closing spiked wall. All in a day's work.

HH Your filmography is filled with a lot of interesting technology. Can you explain what "Wargle" and "Chrysalis" effects are?

BB Wargle, if I remember correctly, was the name of Liev Schreiber's character in *Phantoms*. He gets his legs shot off, but grows ten-



Fun Fact: Billy Bryan has worked as a special effects actor as the Pit Witch (*Army of Darkness*), Bicentennial Man (1999) and the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man (*Ghostbusters*).



Mark Wilson behind the scenes with Slimer during the making of *Ghostbusters*.

tacles which he then uses to attack the heroine. The apparent force and intent were a result of the fact that the attack was shot in reverse. For another scene, after his head is shot off, for the monster sprouting from the resulting orifice, we used a fluid-filled membrane effect. We shot that one upside down, using the weight of the fluid to propel the effect.

Chrysalis effects would be found in *Species 1* and *2*. This was the first instance of the now-infamous plastic bag effects which I invented. Throughout the film, many of the alien growth effects were made from plastic baggies, elaborately manipulated and covered with slime.

Mark Wilson (Resume includes *Ghostbusters*, *Thriller*, *Fright Night*, *Beetlejuice*, *Team America*)

HorrorHound How did your love for special effects first start?

Mark Wilson It started in elementary school when I saw *Snow White* and the Seven Dwarfs done with marionettes, and they allowed us to go behind the stage. We got to see how they worked, and I also saw the props, so I immediately went home and, probably at 5 or 6 years old, got some materials together so I could make a little cart, because the dwarves had a little cart that they pushed. I thought, "I can do that."

HH Were you hired for *Team America* specifically because of your background making marionettes?

MW At the time, I was working for the Chiodo Brothers. I've known them for many years and have built marionettes, muppet-type costumes, all kinds of stuff for them. They were putting together a pretty big crew, they brought me in originally to build camels for the *Caro* scene. I ended up being sort of the "puppet wrangler," so I was first unit. Whenever Matt and Trey were on set directing, I was usually on that unit making sure the puppets were up and working.

HH I noticed you weren't credited on *Ghostbusters* despite doing a lot of work on the film. Why no recognition?

MW That was unusual. I expected to get credit. I worked on it for many months, sculpting both the librarian ghost and Slimer, worked on the Teradon constructions and did a little sculpting on just about everything. My main duty though was working on Slimer. There was something weird that happened with the credits on *Ghostbusters*, and a whole bunch of people were left off. There were apologies from producers, and they put a very special "Thank You" in the *Hollywood Reporter* to make up for their mistake.

HH Speaking of Slimer, can you tell the story of the infamous room service "food cart" scene?

MW I really wanted to do Slimer. There was this scene with the cart in the hall where Slimer is rummaging through all the plates and dishes. Most of that stuff

was oversized because we were trying to make Slimer smaller than he actually was. We had to have him clear off the cart which was covered in banana peels, mashed potatoes and green beans. I had to shovel all this food down the back of my neck to make it look like Slimer was eating. I remember Mark Segal was controlling the tongue, and he had his arm up and through the back of the costume. We were all pretty good friends, so it got pretty giddy and silly.

HH Can you talk about working on the set of *Thriller*?

MW 'Ya, I was a "walker." I was one of the guys on Rick Baker's crew. I did the zombie gloves, which were spandex gloves that I would detail with latex and glue the zombie fingertips on. We [the guys on Rick's crew] also got to design our own makeup for *Thriller*. So I got to create my own fake teeth and appliances. I'm in several scenes way in the background usually just kind of limping around. Where you can see me is in the theater audience. There's a pair of eyeglasses catching the reflection on the screen, just about in the back row. I'm up toward the back and to the right sitting in the audience when Michael gets up and walks out.

HH That must have been a pretty amazing experience, working with Michael Jackson.

MW Oh, it was. Those kinds of life experiences, *Ghostbusters* and *Thriller* are immeasurable. Running into John Landis, Rick Baker, Michael Jackson—on day we were on set on *Thriller*, it was late at night and Jackie Onassis came by to say hello to Michael. I couldn't believe it.

HH Have you worked with Bill Bryan since *Ghostbusters*?

MW 'Ya, I know Bill very well. We both kind of do the same thing. We wear costumes and puppeteer, and we're both kind of indie filmmakers doing our own thing with video using our wacky senses of humor and puppetry and stuff. Occasionally I work with him professionally on a job from time to time.

HH Have you ever done a convention before?

MW I've done one previous one in London. *HorrorHound* will be my second. Doing a convention is a rare thing. I felt so fortunate, to sit at a table, and have people come up and say, "You did some cool stuff and it really affected me." One guy came from Holland to London just to meet someone who had worked on his favorite film. What a rush, to stand there and have somebody say how deeply you have touched their lives. You don't get that in your everyday life.

The cool thing about doing these shows, is being able to go to places I've never seen before. I haven't done much traveling outside of what I was paid to do on some films. I'm really looking forward to seeing another part of America. 🐾



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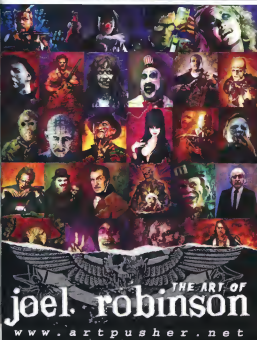
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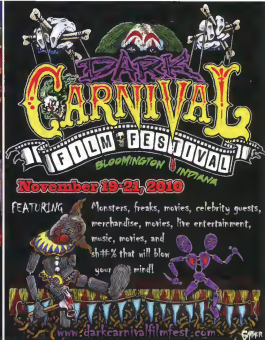
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